



FSA Ombudsman News

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"It's not about who's right...it's about doing the right thing!"

- The Opposite of Conflict isn't Harmony; it's Apathy, or Cynicism, or Frustration, or Resignation.
- Conflict is like a puzzle. Sometimes a piece doesn't seem to make any sense. How does the new information fit? There must be a way to put this together for a cohesive picture...

*From: "What is an Ombudsman?",
<http://www.sandia.gov/ombud/whatsano.ppt>,
Sandia National Laboratories and
paraphrased by
Melissa Lewis*

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(See the *Ombudsman Contact List* for a complete list of specialists.)

Feature Item:

Active Listening and Feedback

Active Listening is a structured form of listening and responding that focuses attention on the speaker. The listener must take care to attend to the speaker fully, and then repeat, in the listener's own words, what he or she thinks the speaker has said. The listener does not have to agree with the speaker – he or she must simply state what s/he thinks the speaker said. This enables the speaker to find out whether the listener really understood. If the listener did not, the speaker can explain some more.

While active listening can be helpful in most conversations, it is especially helpful in difficult or uncomfortable conversations where there is high potential for misunderstanding and/or escalation. It forces people to listen attentively to the other person and it also avoids misunderstandings, since people have to confirm that they interpreted the speaker correctly. If they didn't, the speaker has a chance to restate what she was saying. Another benefit is that it slows the conversation down, allowing people to "cool off" before they respond. In addition, it tends to open people up, to get them to say more.

**From: Heidi Burgess,
Co-Director, Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado**
http://www.crinfo.org/ck_es_says/ck_active_listening.cfm

Turning Around Polarized Mindsets

- 1) encourage parties to listen effectively;
- 2) guide the parties on how to give feedback to each other;
- 3) help parties take responsibility for their actions and feelings;
- 4) help parties clearly explain their positions to the other; and
- 5) help parties blend their interests to reach common ground.

By Jack A. Hamilton & Elisabeth Seaman

Food for thought....

The Hidden and Direct Costs of Unresolved Conflict

Wasted Time

Productivity lost "documenting actions" instead of "communicating."

Productivity lost talking to others about the conflict.

Time spent in extra management involvement.

Poor decisions based on power contests.

Loss of future business opportunities.

Loss of future revenue.

Costs more to service a defaulting portfolio v. a healthy one

Catch it early to avoid cost of responding to Congressional inquiries.

The later a problem is dealt with, the more costly

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OmbudsSpeak:

Negotiation is the process by which two or more parties attempt to reach an agreement. The basic act of pausing to consider what other arrangements might work better for everyone involved (and that the other person or persons might agree to) can open up many opportunities that at first sight do not appear to be "negotiable." Chris Honeyman, President, [CONVENOR](http://www.crinfo.org/ck_essays/ck_negotiation.cfm) Director, Broad Field Project
http://www.crinfo.org/ck_essays/ck_negotiation.cfm

Recommended Reading: Controlling the Costs of Conflict: How to Design a System for Your Organization

by Karl Slaikeu and Ralph Hasson.
Read how to create systems within organizations that preempt the monetary, strategic, and emotional costs associated with on-the-job conflict.

Coming Events:

July 12-15: The Ombudsman Association (TOA) courses, e.g., Ombuds 101, 101 Plus, Individual and Group Dynamics in Conflict, The Advanced Series-Conflict Theory, Toronto, Canada

July 18-21: NASFAA Conference, Minneapolis, MN